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**Ryszard Kuklinski: A Case Officer's View
Aris Pappas**

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Ryszard Kuklinski: A Case Officer's View

Aris Pappas

April 29, 2004

Aris Pappas is a partner in and co-founder of Intelligence Enterprises, LLC. He retired from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 2003, having served for twenty-eight years in the intelligence community. He joined the CIA as a military analyst after six years as an active duty Army officer. As an analyst, he studied Soviet theater-level plans, concepts, and doctrine, and was assigned specifically to monitor Polish preparations and planning for the implementation of martial law. Later, he was the assistant national intelligence officer for General Purpose Forces during the first Gulf War, and still later became the chief of the CIA's Soviet Theater Forces Division. He then ran operations for five years. After a year as head of analysis and warning at the FBI's National Infrastructure Protection Center, he became senior technical advisor to the deputy director of the CIA. Following the events of September 11, 2001, he was named the first chief of the director of central intelligence's (DCI's) Homeland Security Staff and held that position until his retirement from government service. He has bachelor's and master's degrees in international relations from the City College of New York (CCNY) and Boston University, respectively, and is a graduate of the Naval War College.

Oettinger: I am delighted to introduce our guest for today, Aris Pappas. I've called this book, *A Secret Life*, to your attention.¹ Unfortunately, it was published this year and not in time for me to make it available to you. I hope some of you have had an opportunity to look at it. It's the story of a Polish asset, you might say. Aris will tell you the story as he saw it. He has told me that he is interruptible with questions as we go along. So, as usual, let this be a conversation. I'm especially pleased to have him here, because I consider him to be one of my longest-standing friends. Nobody falls asleep in Aris Pappas's presence.

Pappas: A couple of us have already gotten together and talked a bit at lunch, and since I have only one set of introductory jokes and things like that you're going to have to listen to them again.

My name is Aris Pappas. I spent twenty-eight years at the CIA. I spent six years before that as an active duty Army officer. My principal forte at the CIA was the study of Soviet military

¹Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

forces. My degrees are in international relations in Russian area studies from CCNY and Boston University.

Oettinger: CCNY when it was of mighty stature.

Pappas: That’s right; they don’t know that, so I have to say that at one time CCNY was actually called, no kidding, “The proletarian Harvard.” I’m sure as hell proletarian and I wasn’t going to Harvard. The important thing is that I studied Soviet military forces. I’m a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College. I spent a year up there as part of the Centennial Class, 1983 to 1984. I was the assistant national intelligence officer during the first Gulf War, which meant that I coordinated the Washington-area intelligence community activity in support of General Schwarzkopf. I was the chief of the Soviet Theater Forces Division when the Soviets decided to give up, which, as I told people earlier, was really a mark against me, because I thought I had picked something that was going to last at least longer than my projected retirement date. When they quit on me, I had to go do other things.

In a very unusual circumstance for a defense intelligence analyst, I then ran operations for five years, so I have some knowledge of human operations. After five years working DI/DO [Directorate of Intelligence/Directorate of Operations] operations, I then spent a year at the FBI, where I was in charge of analysis and warning at the National Infrastructure Protection Center, which was essentially the cyber cops. From there I went back and became senior technical advisor to the deputy director of the CIA and worked with the Advanced Technology Panel, which is now called the Intelligence Science Board. Subsequently, post 9/11, I was the first chief of the DCI’s Homeland Security Staff, which was the last position I held before I retired in January 2003. In January 2003 a friend of mine and I started a company, and we’ve been working with various commercial interests since then, plus pretty much full-time work at the Department of Homeland Security [DHS], which we’re trying to help with aspects of infrastructure protection.

Oettinger: Your new boss, Bob Liscouski, was just here.²

Pappas: On top of that, I am a member of the four-person Kerr Commission or Kerr Group, whatever it is (Commission might be too high faluting), which is doing the internal review of Iraqi intelligence and the use of intelligence in decisions leading up to the current Gulf War. Talk about a hot potato—that’s a hot potato! We began that work, I might add, before the war even started, so this is not in response to the controversy, but is something that was going to be done anyway, and we started doing it. What we thought would be very easy turned out to be very hard and very controversial.

I know Tony said this, but let me repeat it. We are all far, far better off with your interrupting to ask a question as questions come to mind, than with letting me ramble on.

Oettinger: It’s because you ramble.

²Robert P. Liscouski, “Taking Responsibility for Our Security,” in *Seminar on Intelligence, Command, and Control, Guest Presentations, Spring 2004* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy, I-04-1, January 2005), [On-line]. URL: <http://www.pirp.harvard.edu/publications/pdf-blurb.asp?id=604>

Pappas: I don't have a prepared text. Also, my conceit is such that if there is anything I really want to say, I'm going to sneak it into the answer to any question that you ask anyway. But the point is that I'm also trying to answer your question, so it's better that you ask a question and don't feel like you're putting anybody off. You're certainly not interrupting me. I actually welcome the sort of wide interaction with answering the kinds of things that are on your mind rather than my just going through some stale recitation and what goes through the addled mind of a thirty-five-year intelligence veteran.

When I started at the CIA, I had been in the Army for six years. The last four years of that I was an intelligence officer at Headquarters, U.S. Army, in Europe. My responsibilities there were to look at and estimate the capabilities of the Soviet forces. I left there in 1974. The Army in Europe was very big. We were in the middle of the cold war. The United States had huge forces in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], and the Russians had even huger forces in Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and the western Soviet Union. All of those forces were poised to attack the West.

Let me straighten out one thing so that we can discharge political issues right away. We don't have to worry about the issue of whether or not communism is predatory, whether the United States should have been there or shouldn't have been there, what the Russians were going to do, how anyone can say those poor Russians were offensive when actually they were only defending their own country, and all that. I can assure you that if I could produce a Russian general who would sit here and talk with you at the same time as I talk with you, he would agree that the Russian concept of defensive engagement was offensive. The best defense is an offense, and the way they were going to defend the Soviet Union was by attacking the West. That becomes important to the story of the use that we made of this gentleman whom we'll talk about. If they believed that the way to defend themselves against an attack by the West was by attacking the West, and the perception in the West was that the Soviets were going to attack them, then you can see instantaneously that any kind of a miscalculation by either of those two sides could result in an absolute disaster, which neither one of them actually intended. Does that make sense? Do you understand the point?

The fact is that they were going to go west and we were going to defend it, whether we started it, or they started it, or nobody really started it. If there was a miscalculation and there was a war in Europe, that was the way it was going to play out. It wasn't going to play out with NATO forces charging into the Soviet Union. We absolutely, flatly, did not have the capacity to do that. There is no way we could have done it. We didn't have the people there to do it. We didn't have the plans there to do it. It wasn't going to work that way. The whole issue of good guys/bad guys and all that has nothing to do with this part of the story. It has to do with intentions, the use of intelligence, and miscalculation. That's the setup.

The other part of the setup is how things were laid out, particularly in that northern tier of Eastern Europe to Central Europe. Basically, in West Germany were the preponderance of NATO forces: mostly Americans, a lot of Germans, and some British. The French had already left NATO and were sitting back in France. Behind that were some Dutch forces and some Belgian forces. Not to denigrate anybody, but they were not very big, not very capable, not what you would call a reserve, just a few additional forces. The big fight was going to occur in West Germany, with the U.S. 7th Army, which had two corps and about six divisions, and the West Germans defending

that line against an attack by upwards of twenty or so Soviet divisions coming out of East Germany, together with East German divisions and some Czechoslovakian divisions coming up from the south. Behind Germany was Poland. There were a bunch of Soviet forces plus twenty Polish divisions in Poland. A division was, what would you say, 2,000 people?

Student: A division in the Soviet army? Oh no, it was like 9,000 people. But U.S. Army divisions are 15,000 to 17,000.

Pappas: Yes, I knew it was smaller. I couldn't remember the number. I think there were ten Soviet divisions in Poland, but there were twenty Polish divisions. Geography is important here. There will be a point behind this. Behind Poland were the western districts of the Soviet Union. In the western districts of the Soviet Union was another whole Soviet army just as big as the one they had in East Germany. So they had two whole sets of armies against NATO, which had basically one army. There was no NATO reserve. That's important. The Soviets had a reserve.

The way the war plan was going to work was that the first strategic echelon, which is what the Soviets called it, was going to attack NATO. They would be more or less evenly matched in terms of numbers (we won't get into the issue of quality) and you'd have this huge fight. The first strategic echelon would start to nibble at NATO and cause casualties—cause the NATO capability to be drawn down. Then the plan was that the whole second strategic echelon would come roaring across Poland on a number of strategic military routes and when they brought themselves to bear against NATO there would be an overwhelming amount of force, and therefore NATO would collapse. Okay? Simple.

What was NATO's strategy? It had to stop the second strategic echelon from ever reaching the battlefield. And so, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when technology began to bring itself to bear on the question of conventional war, we began to develop what were called deep strike systems. Those were things that ultimately resulted in stuff like cruise missiles and so on and so forth. The idea was that the forces that we had in West Germany would stop the initial Soviet assault and we'd use these deep strike systems to basically interdict and deny the second strategic echelon's ability to cross from Poland and bring itself to bear. What does that mean to Poland?

Student: They had better get a good air defense!

Pappas: Forget air defense. It's not just air defense, it's missiles and stuff like that. Basically, Poland was going to be laid waste, because we were not going to attack the western Soviet Union. As long as those forces were still in the western Soviet Union, by definition, they weren't at war yet. It was when they started moving that the war started, and as soon as they started moving they would be in Poland. The first crack that we were going to get at them was when they were in Poland, and so Poland was going to take the hits—big-time hits. If the war went nuclear, which was NATO's response to having no reserves, guess where a lot of the nuclear weapons would be thrown, excluding the strategic ones going to Moscow and so forth. Again, the war in Europe was going to be fought largely on the territory of two countries: Germany and Poland. Not so much France, not so much Czechoslovakia, not even so much the western Soviet Union, because by the time those forces started moving there wouldn't be much to hit in the western Soviet Union anymore. These people would all have moved into Poland. Poland was going to turn into a

butcher shop. That's the important strategic setup to help you understand what this man did and why he did it.

I was a young officer who had just joined the CIA and was given access to this information, because my responsibility was to study what the Soviets were going to do against Western Europe: how they would do it, whether they would be effective, and so on. Of course the CIA, plus the military and lots of sources, were all trying to collect this information. We were doing the best we could to get information on how the Soviets were going to do this and why they were going to do it, and allow ourselves to make an assessment of whether or not they would be successful.

Among the material we were provided was, first of all, a great deal of what they call technical intelligence: information that's derived from intercepted communications or from overhead photography. Mind you, back in 1970 when I started doing this, literally most of the people in the world had not considered that there were satellites that could be taking pictures—certainly not taking pictures with the degree of accuracy that we were able to achieve even back then. So this was a black art. It was something people didn't know much about. It was pretty sexy stuff at the time.

So there I was. They were exposing me to all this stuff and saying, "Here's a picture of *this*." I was saying, "Wow, that's really cool!" because I'm easily impressed and it was kind of neat. Unfortunately, you begin to fall into the trap that, "Gee, if they spent a trillion dollars to get this information, it must be a trillion dollars worth of information." That's wrong, too. We'll talk about that later.

So we were getting all these pictures and all these intercepts. An intercept is just like catching a fragment of a phone call. If you were trying to figure out what was going on in an associated dorm or in the department next door at the arts and sciences faculty, and all you were getting were intercepted fragments of phone calls, you'd still be getting some information. You might know they were having a meeting at eleven o'clock on Thursday, but you might not know what it was really about, because the portion that you intercepted said, "Say, Fred, we're having a meeting at eleven o'clock. You know what that's about, don't you?" "Yeah, I know, it's that damn Tony. He's up to that same old thing again." "Yeah, well, we've got to stop him." It's such good information! It sounds cool, but who the hell is Tony? And what is that same old thing that he's doing? Because we didn't have that previous bit of information, we don't know which Tony it is, and if it's the same old thing you think it is or something else. You've got to start putting all this stuff into context. You've got to understand what all this information means and what they're thinking and why they're doing it. Are they going to reshape the department or hang new drapes? You don't know whether they're changing the curriculum or deciding you need new seats in the conference room. There is no way to tell. To some bureaucrats hanging drapes is a big decision.

So you've got to get a context. The way you get a context is to have somebody in that department—again to use this academic setting—come over and talk to you about just what the hell the sociology department is doing. Are they changing the curriculum? Why are they changing the curriculum? Is it because someone wrote a book that's so prescient that they have to reconsider all their options and readjust their thinking, and all the assumptions they've used to direct the curriculum are now erroneous or outdated? Or do they want to build their faculty into a

counterattack on this new concept of sociology, because they think it's crap and it affects their budget? Or is it that the teaching fellow doesn't want to have to rewrite the curriculum because he's a week away from his Ph.D. and he'll be damned if he's going to start all over again just because somebody wrote a book? All of these things come into play. You want to talk to somebody and find out what the heck this guy Tony is doing. That is the beauty and the essence of a deep penetration by human intelligence, because it provides you with the ability to look in and not just take out secrets but begin to understand mysteries.

Let me draw a distinction for you between secrets and mysteries, because intelligence deals with both. Most of the time when you watch spy shows on TV or you're reading about James Bond or Jack Ryan in Tom Clancy's books they're dealing with secrets. They're always stealing secrets, right? They're stealing plans for submarines; stealing this and that. Secrets, I want to tell you, are relatively easy. What's a secret? A secret is "What's the memory in Joe's laptop?" I don't know. I've never touched it, I've never looked closely at it, and I have no idea whether he left it the way it was when he bought it or he added memory to it. I'm a Mac person, so I know what you can do with that, but I don't know about PCs. So I don't know how much memory is in that machine, but the memory in that machine is an absolute number. It's a fact. If I take the machine from him I'll find out. If I ask him and he's willing to tell me I'll find out. If I know that he never updated it and I've got a catalogue at home, and I know that's the same machine, I can go to the catalogue and it will tell me it's got two gigs or whatever. Once I know, I know. It's not a secret anymore. He might have been trying to withhold it from me, but there are lots of ways of pulling out the secret, and once I've got the secret I've got it.

In military terms, an example of that would be, "How big is the gun on this tank?" "I don't know." You can get somebody who goes in and measures it, you can steal the plans, or you can buy a tank if you can get one from a third country, and then you just go in there with a tape measure and you say "It's six inches across," and that's it. That's secret's gone. It's done. That's a secret.

Once you've stolen the secret and the other side knows you've stolen the secret, what are they going to do? Change the secret! If it's important to Joe that I not know how much memory is in his machine, and I finally figure out that he's got 512 megs in there, and he knows that I know it's 512, what is the first thing he's going to do? If it's important that I not know, he's going to put more megs in it, or maybe he will take some out. It can go either way.

Secrets are easy. You don't always have the answers, but they're easy. A secret would be, "Does Saddam Hussein have weapons of mass destruction or doesn't he?" That's a secret because there's an answer. He probably knows. Somebody knows, but we haven't hit that person yet, have we? We don't have access to that secret. So what you do is you treat it as a mystery.

What's a mystery? A mystery is something for which there is no concrete answer, but it is nevertheless equally compelling, maybe more so. A mystery, for example, would be "What's going on in his head?" Let's assume that "he" is Saddam Hussein, or (in those days) that he is Wojciech Jaruzelski, the first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party and later president of Poland, or Leonid Brezhnev, or Boris Yeltsin, or whoever. You want to know what the guy is thinking. Let me tell you: you could put a chip in his head that gives you a real-time readout of what he's thinking all the time, and as scary as that might be (if I had a chip put in my head it

would frighten most people) you could be taking a real-time readout of what this person is thinking and you still wouldn't know what he's going to do tomorrow. Why? Because he doesn't know. Down to a certain level of definition, he really doesn't. He doesn't know which side of the bed he's going to wake up on, even if he always gets up on the same side of the bed. But it depends on whether he had a fight with his wife or not. He could wind up on the other side of the bed. He could end up out of the bed, on the couch. Or he could think, "I want to wear blue today, but the weather is just too gray for me to wear blue. I just don't like it. I want to wear gray." You just don't know what the hell he's going to do. Those are mysteries.

Let me assure you that most issues having to do with important decisions are not really secrets until they've been written down someplace. They are mysteries. You want to know what the Warsaw Pact is planning for a war in Europe. You don't just want their plans; you want to understand why they wrote the plans that way. You want to understand why they decided to attack in a particular direction. Until you've got somebody who can penetrate to the thought process level, so he can tell you how the whole thing is working, you can't get there. All you've got is paper. By the way, if you don't understand how the person got it he can change it and you'll never know he changed it, and you can't even be sure that you haven't got bogus paper.

Let's get back to the example of the computer. If I know that he's doing a certain kind of computer work that requires him to have no less than 512 megs in that machine, that's important information. If I understand that, I'm now able to say, "Not only have I stolen the secret that he's got 512 in there, but I also know that he has to have 512 in there, because there are things that he has to do that he couldn't do if he had any less than 512. So if I could affect his 512, I could screw up his plan." If he then feeds me information that says "No, no, no, I only have 128 in there," I know he's bullshitting, because that means that he can't even be doing the job that I know he's already doing, because I know that requires 512. But to do that, I have to know not just what's in the machine, I have to know what's in his head, why he's using that machine, what he's using it for, and where he expects to go with it. Am I making sense to you guys? If I'm just drifting off, you've got to stop me.

Student: I just want to clarify that idea of a mystery if you have a readout of what's in someone's head. What you're saying is that just those facts in and of themselves don't lead you to any knowledge of the future, but if you interpret those facts with some kind of thought process and pattern then you might have it.

Pappas: Right. It's not that you won't have "any" knowledge, but it will be insufficient. In other words, you take what you can get. If all you can get is little bits, you take the little bits and you keep them until somewhere, somehow, you can put them in context. Everything counts. You never know whether it's relevant or not until later.

If somebody had said in August 2001 that there were a couple of people taking flight training lessons in Florida, what would have happened? Everybody's making a big deal about this in retrospect. Again, I'm not going to get into politics here. We're just going to get into human nature. I'm telling you that nobody would have done anything about that, because there was nothing to be done. What can you make out of that? This is a complex society. You've got people taking training to do lots of things. Honest people are taking training as sous chefs. What does that mean? Does it mean that they're going to poison somebody in a restaurant in New York next

week? Well, it could! “Mary is taking training as a chef. Why? Because she wants to get a job in a big restaurant. Why does she want to get a job in a big restaurant? Because she happens to know that three times a week the secretary of state and very important people eat there, and she’s going to poison their asses next week.” If that happens, then after the fact you’re going to look like a real ass for not having picked up on the fact that somebody said that Mary was taking cooking lessons.

So in and of themselves the cooking lessons just don’t mean a damn thing. But you want to keep that information. Suppose another piece of information comes in that says that a young blonde lady is reported to be interested in poisoning the secretary of state, and somehow that gets connected with the fact that somebody else said that there is this blonde lady taking cooking lessons in New York, and then I link that information with the report that she seems to have an acquaintance with the owner of a restaurant where the secretary of state dines three times a week, well, it starts to get more interesting. By the way, it could also lead to a false arrest, not to put too fine a point on it. The point is if you don’t do that you’re not connecting any dots. You’ve just got information in space.

Student: At what point can you take action on information like that?

Pappas: That’s a good question, but we’ll save it until later, because really that’s dealing with the consequences, and what I’m still trying to do is give you a sense of why this guy Kuklinski did what he did. We’re going to start talking about him shortly. All of this is pertinent, because I want you to understand the tremendous significance of what this guy did.

Student: We had a speaker here from DHS and I asked him how we could ever know that the 9/11 guys didn’t just get lucky, even though it doesn’t look on the surface as though it was very complicated for nineteen guys to hijack a plane the way they did it.³ He said the weather could have been different that day, and they might not have been able to see their target. Also, I remember we had a case of poisoning in Oregon where a cult put salmonella in a salad bar. How are you going to stop people like that? There’s no way you can stop everybody who goes out like that.

Pappas: I can’t answer for the DHS, because I’d be in big trouble, but I can answer for me. You can’t. That’s the bummer. What you have to do is limit their opportunity and then hope for the best. Now, there is not a guy in the world who is going to get elected dog catcher with a platform that says “I’m hoping for the best.”

I’m also a firm believer in reality (not reality TV, I’m a disbeliever in that). I believe in reality, and reality is that some of this stuff is just too goddamn hard, because the only real answer to it is for us to throw the baby out with the bath water and eliminate so many of our civil rights that we’re not the country that we were starting out to protect to begin with. I’m not a civil libertarian, but the fact of the matter is the bad guys in this case are exactly trying to push us off our own dime. If they manage to push us off, either because we decide for ourselves that’s it’s a good idea or because they force us to do it, the effect is the same and that is the disruption of this

³See note 1.

society. What they are trying to effect is the disruption of this society, and therefore we become complicit in their crime, which is a real bad case. The only way that you can get ahead of that is by eliminating the kind of knee-jerk reaction that necessarily attends each one of these affairs. I can talk to you a little bit more about that later, but let's get back to this Kuklinski.

What you have is a situation that I've tried to describe in which Poland looks like it's going to turn into a meat grinder. It's also a situation in which young Aris Pappas goes to the CIA, not by himself but with lots and lots of other people, and starts to read material on how the Soviets are going to do this with the view—honest to God, whether you believe it or not—of trying to prevent it from happening. One of the ways you prevent it from happening is by building up your own capabilities to such an extent that the other side is deterred. The way you deter people is not through good argument but by full capability. And so, yes, there was a component to this that was very bloody minded and offensive. My belief was that we were providing intelligence that would contribute to the defeat of the Soviet forces and that was not going to be by arguing them to death. I'm not being trite about this sort of thing. It's a bloody business. On the other hand, the basic purpose of this was not to let it happen to begin with, for any number of good reasons.

Has anyone here read the book? No? Then I could tell you anything!

Oettinger: Trust, but verify!

Pappas: This guy, whose picture is on the cover of this book, is a Pole. His name is Ryszard Kuklinski. He was born before World War II. His father died at Sachsenhausen at the hands of the Germans. After the war was over, as a young man, he tried to find some records of his father, but he never did. His father basically disappeared into the maw of the Holocaust. He was not Jewish. Lots of other people went, too. This affected him, because he understood what it meant to be occupied, because Poland was occupied by the Germans. It was not a friendly time.

If you go back into history, which I will not try to recreate, the Poles had not been enamored of the Russians either. The poor Poles were the meat in the sandwich between the Germans and the Russians, and depending on which one of them had the bigger army, either the Russians were going to come west across Poland or the Germans were going to go east across Poland. One way or the other, someone was going across Poland, and that's not a good thing.

He found himself after World War II as a dedicated Pole, joined the military, became an army officer, and started to work within the Polish military. Increasingly, it became evident to him that the Polish military was essentially a fraud. Poland was a puppet state run by the Soviets. Not to put too fine a point on it, this was not a cooperative agreement between the Poles and the Soviets. The Soviets owned Poland lock, stock, and barrel. It was the same thing with East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and if you dispute that, go back and look at Germany in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, or Solidarity and the problems they had in 1981. This was a system of absolute, flat-out control, and the higher up he rose in the Polish military the more he began to realize that the Soviets had, in effect, set up Poland to be this meat grinder. The Soviet plan inescapably would result in bad things for Poland—not that it wouldn't result in bad things for the Soviet Union, too, but really bad things for Poland. What were the Polish military officers doing in the face of the threat to their homeland and to their people? They were effectively kowtowing and contributing to the disaster, because they didn't have the wherewithal to resist.

So, for a purpose that he honestly and genuinely saw as noble—to protect the Polish people—he decided to take action against the Soviet oppression and occupation of his homeland. He tried unsuccessfully a couple of times to offer his services to the West. In his second attempt to offer himself to the West, he got in contact with some people who he thought were his peers in the American military, and offered to set up a cabal, in effect, within Poland whereby he and some like-minded officers would be prepared to attempt some kind of overthrow and do mutinous kinds of things within Poland. When that information reached the United States (it's all in the book, and better done in the book, too, I might add), it was decided that was a really bad idea. "It's a one-shot deal, and it isn't going to work anyway. It's very romantic. It sounds exciting, but it's just not going to happen." They went back to him the next time he contacted them and asked, "Would you be willing to work by yourself and provide information concerning Soviet war planning and so on and so forth, which would help us in our attempts to know what the Soviets are doing?"

Student: Do you think the Army thought he was just a plant?

Pappas: Initially they didn't know he wasn't a plant. Let me start with that.

The first thing that happens when anybody walks in—which is what it's called, a walk-in—is that you have to decide whether this guy's real or not, whether he's setting you up, whether there's bad information in there, and so on. One of the ways you do that is by comparing all the information he gives you to the other information you've already got and then determining whether or not there's any way he would already know that you have that information. If it's information that he would know you have, then you can't use that for a test. If it's information that he couldn't conceivably know you have, but it matches, then that's starting to make him look pretty good. Right? If it doesn't match, then it's in somebody else's favor. Then you start to worry about whether or not the information is being planted on you. Those are the first steps of this. It's called vetting a source.

You immediately start to vet the source and then you vet the source's information as it comes in. That's a constant process, no matter how long the source is with you. You always have to worry about the source who had been working for you changing his mind at any point, even years later, and suddenly starting to give you bad information. So it's a process that goes on forever.

In any event, this guy made that kind of an approach. The approach was, in effect, accepted for him to be a source, so he started to provide information. The bottom line on this guy is that for the next nine years, between 1971 and 1980, he provided the United States 45,000 documents, all taken from the highest levels of the command of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet high command. Why? Because he had direct access to them. He was the chief operations officer for the Polish army. He was sent by the Poles to the Voroshilov Staff Academy, which is where they send general staff officers for training. He was a graduate of that institution. From a spy's perspective I will tell you that it doesn't get any better than this.

Here is a picture of Kuklinski in this book. Here is the Soviet defense minister and here is the Soviet chief of the general staff. He's handing them papers to sign. Here is another picture of him, and here is Marshal [Viktor] Kulikov, who was the head of the Soviet military forces in

Germany, and here is General [Anatoly] Gribkov, who was the chief of staff of the Warsaw Pact. It does not get any better than that kind of access. That was our guy, a U.S. spy, basically writing the war plans for the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact, and doing all that staff work for them. These are incredible photographs.

This guy was at the highest, highest levels. What was he giving us? He was stealing all of those little things that I told you about, like little snippets and all that. As things went across his desk, if he thought that they were of any significance he would take them home and he would photograph them. By the way, this was in the early 1970s. They didn't have all this satellite stuff and really sexy things. This was called "Take the document; take it out of the building—not so easy, think about it; take it home; take some little Minox camera; take pictures of it, hoping your neighbors in these apartments with the paper-thin walls don't hear cameras going 'click, click, click' in the middle of the night; then take the roll of film when it's done and somehow get that to an American and get the document back into the building without getting caught."

Student: When you talk about sources like this, was the CIA generally just accepting whatever information he brought in, or was the CIA making any requests?

Pappas: Both. The problem with a human source is that the contact with that source can be very limited depending upon what's a normal schedule for communications. In the case of a source working in what was at that time a denied area—Eastern Europe, where there was a lot of counter-surveillance—you couldn't just call the guy up and say, "Hey, we'd like something on this tank." First, there was a presumption that the phone was tapped; second, there was a presumption that he'd be followed; and third, the source of security was very intrusive—nothing like the worst fears of anybody living here in the West.

What they would do is meet occasionally. These guys would meet like once or twice a year, and at that time he would pass them rolls of film that would contain all these documents. Later on they found other ways for him to transmit images and information, and that's how it began to work, because it became much too complicated to try to find a way to meet with him.

They almost never met physically in Eastern Europe. He would have an excuse to come out of Eastern Europe on some staff tour or have some other reason to be outside the confines of Poland or East Germany or, God forbid, the Soviet Union. At that time he would then make an excuse along the lines that he had to depart from the tour group or the rest of the group because he had to buy car parts or something. That would all have been arranged by us in advance. That, by the way, was a very legitimate thing for an East European officer to do. Cars were always breaking down. You couldn't get parts in Poland, so you went out to Germany to buy the parts and bring them back. It was like souvenirs, except they work. He would know that he was supposed to meet us at a certain apartment or a certain hotel room, and then we would have the recorders there. We would have people there to take notes and we would also have a bag of car parts so that when he went back he could say "Here is where I was," and all the receipts were in there with his name on them and stuff like that. So all of that was taken care of.

Student: So far it still sounds like secrets rather than mysteries and thought processes. In these conversations, do the American intelligence officers have a list of questions that they can ask him?

Pappas: The perfect segue: that's exactly where I was going. The fact of the matter is that through these contacts we began to get an appreciation of not only what the document was, but why he picked it, and then why they wrote it. You can get into these things.

These conversations would go on for hours, not days, because he didn't have that kind of luxury. But the other thing is that once his communication became more facile and he started communicating electronically he could add his comments, and all those were intended to provide us with precisely the reason for my big buildup on context. He was the guy who could tell us the context, because he wasn't guessing why they wrote something: he was the guy who had been told to write it, so he knew exactly why they wrote it.

Student: I would think that his comments would be the real meat of it.

Student: I was interested in the payments that were being made. You were talking about the car parts that would be given to him in Germany. This person seems to have been sincerely and honestly interested in the fate of Poland and the transfer to the West. With other spies whom you recruit primarily from other countries, is the question of payment somewhat difficult? If they are working too much for the money, the information that they give you might not be truthful. Is that ever a problem?

Pappas: I couldn't have said it better myself. That's exactly right. An ideological recruit is by far the best one, because his or her motives are understandable and verifiable. A recruit like the ones in most spy novels is inherently untrustworthy, because if he'll go with you for ten grand, whom will he go to for twenty? For thirty? Can you buy him back for forty-five? It goes back and forth like that.

You can over-generalize this, but in my opinion, to the degree that the person is motivated by greed, that person will largely not be terribly successful in what he's doing. Most of what you're going to be getting from a person like that are the kinds of secrets that you might be able to verify through other sources, but you should be very, very suspicious of his interpretation of context, because you think he's a scumbag anyway. So what do you care if his opinion is this or that, because you suspect his entire motivational structure to begin with?

When you have a person like Kuklinski, you have to take into account what that person thinks about is going on. Whether you agree with him or not is irrelevant, but you know that's what that person sincerely believes, and as long as you know that, then you can use that as a touchstone. I used the term earlier with Tony that what this fellow was doing, in effect, by providing that kind of contextual kind of material was serving as a Rosetta Stone for all the other material that was being provided by other sources. So you're absolutely right.

Student: When you have a source that's of such high importance, secrecy is an absolute necessity. What kind of level are we talking about? How many people in the American government know this person exists. Ten or twenty, maybe?

Pappas: That's a good question. Let me answer it in several different ways. Here I was in 1975, and they showed me a safe full of material that was from a source. The source was identified with a code name for the kind of material. Let's say the code name was "Microphone," so this

information was called Microphone information. As an analyst, I had no idea who that person was, if it was one person or ten persons, or even whether or not it was technical information that was being cleverly disguised as HUMINT [human intelligence] or HUMINT that actually had been converted in some fashion so that I would think it was an intercept or something like that. The reason they did that is not because they didn't trust me, but because there was no need for me at that point to know that Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski was at that very moment sitting in an office in the Warsaw Pact stealing information. What was important for me to know was that somebody with that kind of access was providing us with that kind of information with that kind of importance.

The context in which I knew him while he was still in Poland was not as an individual and not as a person. Now, the better you get as an analyst, over time you start to figure out that this sure as heck is not a Bulgarian, because if you've seen enough of this information you know it's not coming from Bulgaria. You'd probably maybe start to say this looks like a Pole, but it could very well be a Soviet, because most of the information was on Soviet war plans, although it seemed to have a Polish context. Well, if it has a Polish context, it doesn't mean much because the headquarters of the Warsaw Pact are in Warsaw. So you really can't tell. Plus what they will do for security purposes is mix sources up under the same code name, Microphone, so that they intentionally avoid the possibility of one of us, for example, being a spy and being able to blow the whole the whole operation by saying "I know everything this guy said."

Student: Were you ever approached by anyone from the other side?

Pappas: No, I never was, and it's a real source of disappointment to me. I went to Moscow about four times, and I sat there in my hotel room waiting, because there was supposed to be this blonde Soviet spy coming on to me and they should at least give me a chance to say no!

Oettinger: I'll bet it made you feel unimportant.

Pappas: I felt so unimportant, yes. They either felt I didn't know anything or ...

Student: ... they knew you would crack?

Pappas: The answer is no. One time when I was in the Army I was chased around by a stringer from the MFS [Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry of State Security)], which was the East German intelligence service. A stringer is just like a reporter stringer. He's not really an agent. The East Germans had thousands of people floating all around Germany just looking for opportunities, and they would say, "Gee, this guy's talkative. He might tell us something." Then they kind of developed you to see if you were pliable and reliable, and then they'd turn you over to a professional intelligence officer.

I had one of these bozos show up. I was wearing signal officer's insignia on my lapels, because I had come from a signal assignment although I was working in intelligence. My wife was a school teacher, and she was teaching in the U.S. high school in Heidelberg. I don't know if you're familiar with it, but you are if you come from a military family. Part of the whole thing is outreach. There's German-American this and that, and they go on field trips, and it's all great, but

that was a beautiful place for stringers to work their way in to see if they could find some officer who drank too much or liked women too much.

Student: When I was a kid I lived in Germany. It's funny you mentioned that, because they used to have these silly commercials on the Armed Forces Network over there where they would talk about "Keep it secure." They would have this guy sitting in a restaurant talking about convoys leaving his motor pool and this cheesy Boris-looking guy sitting in the next booth listening in. It was pretty funny.

Pappas: Now we've got the records, and there really were thousands of them. This one guy showed up at some educational thing with my wife. Intelligence spoils you in one respect: you get to realizing that nothing in the world is coincidental. You start to suspect anything that's just too good. Talk about looking in the horse's mouth and all that!

This guy showed up, and I swear to God, everything my wife was interested in he was interested in. Everything I was interested in he was interested in. As a biology teacher, my wife wanted to know about fossils. "I know where we can get fossils!" We drove down to some place south of Stuttgart in his car one day and chipped away in this shale pit, and we came up with these gorgeous fossils. He knew I liked airplanes, because my house had models and photographs and things. "Well, wait until you see what I have!" He came back with an original photograph from World War II of one of the top German aces, and he said, "Ja, my grandfather had this. I think you would like it." I was thinking to myself, "Oh bull, this is just crap!"

I went to the security guys I worked with, and I asked, "What do you think?" They said, "This guy stinks a mile long, but he's probably a stringer; you know, not a professional." I asked, "Why?" and they said, "He's after you because you have signal lapels." He thought that as a signal officer, which is what he thought I was, I had all this communication coming past me and it would be a good thing to steal all those documents. If you get into the communication stream, you can just start stealing things wholesale—all the secrets, right? But they didn't want these stringers to get close to a real intelligence officer, because intelligence officers are already jaded and suspicious and their first thought would be to turn the stringer around and try to run an operation against the East Germans. So we knew that their instructions were never to go near a real intelligence officer, but only try to recruit other guys. I asked, "Do you want me to try to play a game with him?" They said, "No, it's not worth it. Let's get rid of him." I said, "How do I get rid of him?" They said, "The next time you see him, just mention the fact casually that even though it looks like you're a signal officer, you're really an intelligence officer, and you just saw General Aaron,⁴ and blah, blah, blah." I said, "Okay."

He came up to the apartment a few days later. I had it set up with my wife and she asked, "Did you see General Aaron today?" I said, "Yes, I saw General Aaron. Boy, this intelligence racket is just getting tougher and tougher!" He looked at me and I said, "Oh, yes, I'm actually an intelligence officer." We never saw him again. He literally disappeared. His phone number was disconnected. He was gone. So, in that sense, I guess I was once almost, sort of, approached. But I was still looking for the blonde, to be honest with you. I don't want you to take it wrong, but it

⁴Then-Major General Harold R. Aaron was assistant Army chief of staff for intelligence from 1973 to 1977.

was just one of those things. I thought this would be so cool. You know, I could go back and tell my wife, “Guess what happened to me in Moscow?! Nothing!”

Student: When my late husband was in Moscow in the 1970s for an environmental conference he got a call at one in the morning from a woman who absolutely had to discuss environmental policy with him right away. He said, “Look, my wife is right here in the room with me.” Of course, he knew perfectly well what was going on. That was one of his proudest moments.

Pappas: These people are subtle as a brick. My wife escorted a group of high school students into the Soviet Union in 1973, when the war in Vietnam was still raging. Every high school student in the U.S. military school in Heidelberg was the child of a relatively senior U.S. military officer. That meant, by definition, that they were in full rebellion, hated their parents, and were fundamentally against the war, and all of them wore a Canadian flag on their backs. You’ve got to think back to the period, folks, okay? So, all of these kids went to the Soviet Union, and they’d just been told all these horrible things about the Soviet Union. Of course, because of their age, and because of the age in which they were living, they knew “This can’t be right. This has got to be crap. Dad’s bullshitting,” and all that sort of thing.

If the Soviets had been good to them they could have recruited a bus load of kids. What did the Soviets do? They put a tail on them. These kids would come back to my wife and say, “We went out to the Lenin memorial and this guy was following us. Then we went across the street and he followed us across the street.” They had others who would come in and try to sell them things like black market money. The kids had been told not to take black market money. Two days later, the same guys who were trying to sell them the money came back and tried to arrest two of them for some other crime. They said, “That’s the same guy who was trying to sell us the money!” They were just too gross. They lost for the same reason the Germans lost World War II. They couldn’t win. They were dangerous, but they couldn’t win. They did this. It’s not my fault.

Oettinger: The next thing you know is that I’m going to tell war stories about how my wife was approached.

Pappas: This is all part of the series. But what happened with Kuklinski is that we had this guy making these contacts and making these approaches, and we were getting all this information in and out. At the same time, we were beginning to take action on it, because it was much more precisely defined exactly which way the Soviets were going to come across Poland. That would allow us to be much more precise about how we would strike them, and an admittedly horrible situation would be at least a little less horrible than it could be.

The other reason that it was important was that as we began to understand how they perceived us and how we should perceive them there was much less opportunity for a miscalculation in the sense of not understanding why they took a certain action. These are the kinds of things that, honest to God, prevent wars from happening by accident. Wars happen by accident, you know. In the case of a cold war like this, in which a single decision or the press of a single button could result in Armageddon, you wanted to do everything you possibly could to avoid that kind of misunderstanding.

I'll give you a concrete example of when he did something that literally saved lives. In 1980, Solidarity was raising its head in Poland and it looked for all the world as if Solidarity was going to cause another set of strikes and unrest in Poland that would mimic the kinds of strikes and unrest that occurred in 1953 and 1956 in Hungary and in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. As it did in those previous examples, that could result in a bloodbath, because the Soviets would come in and repress it. They absolutely would.

As a result of the information that this man gave us, we were able to determine precisely how the Soviets were putting pressure on the Poles, what their arguments were, what their threats were, what they were threatening to move, and what they were threatening to do, and as a result we were able to demarche the Soviets. It sounds crazy, but by demarching the Soviets we put them off their feed and they did not attack Poland in the summer of 1980. They didn't do it, because they understood that if they did it we would know that they were coming. We were going to raise a huge propaganda campaign against them and they would look even worse than they would if it just looked as though they had to do it at the spur of the moment. Do you understand that? That would be the excuse. The excuse would be "The situation got out of control, we had to provide security, and Jaruzelski asked us to do this." We had already told them "We know the situation is not out of control; we know you don't have to do it; we know that Jaruzelski doesn't want you to come in. We're going to tell the whole world and you're going to look like what you are." Believe me, even with the Soviet Union that had an effect. So they began to back off.

Solidarity did not back off. The history then is that Lech Walesa and Solidarity began to put increasing pressure on the Polish government. It was looking more and more like there was going to be some kind of movement toward democracy in Poland, which the Soviets were resisting very strongly, to the extent that they were sending Marshal Kulikov—one of the guys in the photograph there—back to Jaruzelski and telling the Poles, "You're going to have to do something about this or we're going to do it for you."

One of the reasons that our Colonel Kuklinski was convinced that the Soviets were bad guys was his participation in 1968 with the Poles moving down toward the border and almost moving into Czechoslovakia themselves. You remember in 1968 the Soviets attacked Czechoslovakia. Other Warsaw Pact allies were expected to help in that. There is nothing worse for a true nationalist and patriot to see the Russians just rolling tanks through Czechoslovakia and knowing damn well that this could happen in his own country at the slightest pretext. All of these things were solidifying his view that he had to try to avoid this from happening.

I got pulled off. I had been looking at all that military documentation, all of the stuff that confirmed what this gentleman was talking about, all of this contextual stuff, all of the secrets, and I had been writing papers about how the Soviets controlled the Warsaw Pact, how the Warsaw Pact would attack, and what their war plans were, all of which was isolated from any individual. Then all of a sudden, we began to see the situation in Poland taking a dive, and we began to get information that the Poles were beginning to plan for the imposition of martial law in Poland: to use the Polish military against the Polish people. Why did we know that? We knew that because he was the officer in charge of writing the Polish martial law plan. At the same time he was writing the plan he was then going home, copying everything he did that day, and sending it to us so that we would understand exactly what the Poles were planning and preparing to do. I was assigned to read all of that information so that I could understand exactly what the outline of

Polish martial law looked like, so that if we saw these things starting to happen we would be able to take some action: again demarche either the Poles or the Soviets, or do something else. Never forget: knowledge is power!

About this time, a very dramatic thing happened. It's described in the book, but let me tell you about it. Here was a guy who for nine years had been carting Top Secret information out of the headquarters of the Warsaw Pact and taking it back to his apartment, photographing it, putting it in little cans of film, and then having what they call dead-drop meetings with CIA people in the middle of winter and the middle of summer all over Warsaw. These are also described in tremendous detail in the book. This was the kind of thing where on one occasion, for example, he knew that he had hot information on a roll of film. He put the roll of film in a glove. He took the glove and rolled it in grease and made it look like the stinkiest, rottenest, lousiest glove you ever saw in your life. He knew through prearranged signals with the CIA that if he left this glove under a certain lamppost at a certain time, very shortly thereafter a CIA person would run by there, find the glove, pick it up, take the film, and take it out. That's how these things get done.

It was winter. He dropped the film and the glove on the snow and a little while later along came a snow plow and buried the whole thing. The next thing that happened is that some CIA guy, knowing that there was probably a glove under that mountain of snow, had to take the chance on whether or not he was being followed at that particular time by stopping his car and getting out and digging through the snow trying to find the glove. These are colossal chances! Do you understand that what I just described to you was literally a life-or-death situation for both of them? Probably not for the American really, but certainly for the Pole.

On another occasion he was coming out of the headquarters of the Warsaw Pact with a bundle of documents to take home to photograph, none of which he was authorized to take home. He was not paying attention and he hit a column in the foyer of the general staff building and knocked himself right on his butt. His head was bleeding and the papers went flying. He was petrified; he was also sort of half unconscious. All of his friends saw what happened. They went to help him. They picked him up. They picked up his papers, put them all together, handed them to him, and sent him on his way. If one of those guys had looked at the papers, he would have been arrested, no question about it. This was not an issue of friendship. It would have been, "Ryszard, what are you doing with this?" There was no way to BS his way out of it. He would have been finished. They didn't look at the papers and he went on his way.

What he told me numerous times was that tradecraft, which is what they teach you about how to be secure, how to cover your tracks, where to drop the glove and what to make it look like, and that sort of thing, is well and good, but at least 50 percent of this is luck. If he hadn't been lucky, he'd have been dead.

So he did this for nine years. He was sending out this information on what was going on with Solidarity and with the plans for martial law. We were listening to this intently, because we were very, very interested in this. All of a sudden the information stops, and a couple of weeks later I got a call. What happened in the middle?

Colonel Kuklinski went to a meeting of the Polish general staff. As he described it, the chief of the general staff was sitting at the head of the table and arrayed in front of him were six or eight of his senior staff officers: a couple of colonels and the rest generals. Kuklinski was a

colonel. He was sitting to the left of the chief of the general staff. The chief of the general staff said, “Gentlemen, I have terrible news. We’ve been told by our friends the Soviets that we have a spy and that he is providing the Americans with all our information on martial law.”

Colonel Kuklinski was sitting right there and happened to know that he was the guy. He was not clear yet whether the chief of the general staff knew that it was he. Was this a preface? Was this the beginning of a speech that would end with, “You’re arrested, you son of a bitch!” and he would be shot or something? What was going to happen? He was sitting there holding onto the table, and he told me he was ready to give up, because he was a patriot. He was ready to say, “I did this for Poland. Take me away,” and off he’d go to some dungeon, literally. But the chief of the general staff went on for a while about how the Americans had gotten this information somehow. It was at Langley. His sources specifically mentioned that; they didn’t say “in America” or something like that. They said “Langley,” so they knew it was the CIA and that this information had been taken. It was getting pretty clear that they weren’t sure who it was, but they were pretty sure it was somebody in that room. Then he said, “Now I want to hear from you.”

According to Colonel Kuklinski in his testimony to me, this was a case where the most trivial of things had everything to do whether he lived or died. If the chief of the general staff, for whatever reason, had turned to his left and said “Colonel Kuklinski, you speak first,” he would have stood up, made his speech, and gotten carted away to the dungeons. Instead, the chief of the general staff went to his right and said, “You speak first.” Of course the guy stood up, because he was innocent, and said, “We should get this dirty son of a bitch! This is horrible!” “Yes, thank you, colonel. What about you?” “I think it’s even worse than horrible, and we should string him up and cut him into pieces.” All of this time Kuklinski was realizing that they didn’t know who it was, and what the right thing to say was. When they got to him he said it: “They should kill the son of a bitch!”

So out he went, safely. But he also knew that his time was up, and that they were going to narrow this down very quickly. He then, as we would say, called a signal. He pulled his alert chain, whatever the signal was—probably a chalk mark someplace or something like this. The CIA in Warsaw noticed right away that this emergency signal had been flashed, like a bat signal, and arranged to get him out of the country. Honestly, you should read the book for the story of how they got him out of the country, because they could make a movie out of that. A man and his wife, both CIA, arranged it and got him, under hostile surveillance, out of the country with his wife, his two kids, his pets, and I think even with his older son’s girlfriend. We snuck them all out.

Student: What year was this?

Pappas: The winter of 1981.

Student: Does it say who those people were?

Pappas: Yes, it does. They were taken out in the back of a car. It was an elaborate operation to break trails of security forces following them and whatnot. He was taken into Germany first and then flown in a sealed airplane to the United States—which means he didn’t ride back on Pan American. I believe it says in the book that he arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, so it was

probably a military aircraft of some kind. He arrived in the United States with his family and we immediately set about debriefing him.

I had three phases of contact with this gentleman. The first one, which I've kind of described to you so far, was with him as a source. I didn't know who he was. I didn't know there was one person, just that there was a source of material that we were dealing with. His arrival in the United States started the second phase, which was knowing him as a colleague.

The first thing they had to do was just to settle him down with his family. Within three or four days of his access to us I was then taken to a safe house. Do you know what a safe house is? It's a place that's non-attributable. It looks as if normal people were living there instead of crazy CIA people or the FBI or the Drug Enforcement Agency. I went to this safe house and I met this chain-smoking person who spoke no English, who was described to me as a Polish general staff officer. I was in charge of Polish martial law, so I started asking him questions about Polish martial law and he seemed to know a whole lot about it. I asked him some more questions about Polish martial law and he knew even more than that. So we had a tremendous discussion. In fact, at that session I got information that told me one of the most important things that we still didn't actually understand from his documents: that Poland had already made the decision to impose martial law. The important point there was that they weren't still trying to decide whether or not to do it. They, as a government, had already decided to do it. Now they were just waiting for the right circumstances.

That was very important information for us. I went back to my office late that evening and talked to my division chief. Here's how the system really does work. We considered that sufficiently important that I wrote a paper right there at seven o'clock that night and it went straight to the president, which is really kind of neat when you consider I was just a kid. I told the president "The Poles have decided to impose martial law, which means, by the way, that we probably can't give you any more serious warning on when it's going to happen, because some of the indicators that we might have been looking for have already passed and they've already made those decisions. So the next thing we're probably going to report to you is that they're doing it."

It went to the president on a Wednesday. Saturday night—and this is in the book—I was at a party in Baltimore with my wife and one-year old child. I left at one o'clock in the morning or something like that. Driving back in my Volkswagen Rabbit between Baltimore and D.C., with the kid and the wife asleep, I turned on the radio to keep myself awake and the news came on and said, "It appears the Poles have imposed martial law in Poland." My reaction was, "Holy shit, they can't do that! That's *my* account!" Like they needed to ask me!

I went straight to the CIA office where we worked, which happened to be outside the headquarters for the time being because of construction. The guard let me in even though I didn't even have a badge. I looked around, but I couldn't find anybody, so I said, "They must all be at the headquarters." I got on the phone, called headquarters, and sure enough my division chief was there. It was about two o'clock in the morning. He asked, "Where the hell are you? We've been trying to get you all night." (This was before cell phones and that sort of thing.) I told him I was in Baltimore at a party. He said, "Well, they're doing martial law." I said, "Yes, that's why I'm here in the office." He said, "You're in the office?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Bring the stuff. We're talking about it." They had the deputy director for intelligence, who is the senior analyst, and they

had my chief there. They were all trying to figure out whether or not the reports coming out of Poland really meant martial law or some reasonable facsimile. So they said, “Bring the stuff,” by which they meant all of Kuklinski’s material. I will tell you that at the time nothing I knew about in intelligence was more sensitive than this study and here I am talking to a class at Harvard about it, which shows you how the world changes.

So I took a garbage bag, literally, filled it with the pertinent papers on martial law, and went back outside. The guard let me out with the garbage bag—another interesting point. I handed it to my wife (again, it’s all in the book, so you’ll read this) and she said, “What’s this?” I said, “If I play my cards right, it will be a dacha on the Black Sea. I could give this to the Russians. They’d pay me off big time.” We drove back to the headquarters, terrified that at two in the morning some car was going to come out of a side street and sideswipe my Rabbit, at which point all these documents would blow all over the place. I made it to the headquarters, kissed wife and child goodbye, and was buried in the headquarters for the next three days straight as we tried to sort out Polish martial law.

The rest of the story of Kuklinski as colleague is that we realized that even though this man was out, he was still a significant resource to us. This gets to context and to trust. If you get one of these guys who does it for money, most of the time they have access because they know somebody, or they stole the documents, or they can get into a safe and steal something else that doesn’t really belong to them. They’re not the ones writing it, as this guy was. Once they’re out, in effect, they’re useless. They don’t really know anything themselves and if they try to tell you that they do you’d have some real suspicions about whether or not you should trust them. Kuklinski, on the other hand, was a no-kidding graduate of the Voroshilov Staff Academy. This was a guy who worked for the last ten years on the Polish and Warsaw Pact general staff. He spent weeks and days with Marshal Kulikov and Marshal [Dmitry] Ustinov. He knew how they thought. He knew what they were doing. He thought the same way. He was brought up in that system.

Usually what happens to a guy who comes out of another country is that we resettle him as a chicken farmer, or give him money to buy a used-car dealership, a McDonald’s franchise, or something like that. We try to settle them in as Americans someplace and we know they might have an interest in something particular. They might have been getting accrued escrowed funding and so on. We say “Okay, God bless you. If you have any problems, let us know. We’ll continue to help you out, but you’ve changed your name from Ryszard Kuklinski to Joe Schmuckatelli and from now on you’re a used-car dealer.” They go out and become used-car dealers and start a new life. They develop social relationships. They work with people and become Americans—or sometimes they fail. There is a whole sociology of what happened to ex-Soviets and things like that. But we couldn’t do that to this guy, because we couldn’t let him go.

So what happened was that we decided to retain him as if he were still in Poland. That was tricky, because the Poles knew right away they were missing a colonel. That was obvious. “Wait a minute, Kuklinski is not in his chair! What the hell is going on?!” Their first assumption was that they were missing a colonel because he was pissed off about Solidarity and the freedom issue and had defected over the imposition of martial law. That was the first reaction in the Polish press. They had a number of people who defected, including a diplomat.

Very shortly thereafter, though, they began to look around into his background and check things out and follow these little pieces of information that didn't make any sense before that, and they came to the horrible realization that he had been bleeding them from the arterial position for nine straight years. So they had a trial in absentia and sentenced him to death. Therefore, given the way things were, we had to be very, very careful about what we did with him in terms of resettlement, because at any time some kid could show up with that famous little umbrella thing, stick it in his foot, and execute the death sentence. It has happened. This is not a spy story. It really works.

Okay, I'll stop and give you a couple of minutes.

Student: This actually has something to do with what you last said. I was going to ask before why he didn't stop giving you documents and just stay there. I know that he was a patriot and he didn't want to see the imposition of martial law. Wouldn't it have been safer for him than trying to resettle in the United States, and also for you as an agency trying to hide that you have all this information, if he had just stayed there?

Pappas: No. I'll tell you why. It's because he didn't know how much they knew. He wasn't able to tell from that one incident. He pretty much figured out that they didn't know it was him yet, because they didn't arrest him on the spot. There would have been no reason not to. But what that did mean was that all eight people in that room were going to come under intense scrutiny and pretty soon they were going to say "Of the eight people in this room, he's the one who took *this* many trips to the West." Then they were going to interview the people who went with him, and they would say "Every time he went out he was missing for four hours because he had to buy car parts."

I'm not trying to be melodramatic, and I'm not trying to be political. Right now we're having a whole honest-to-God debate in the United States over the rights of prisoners who in many respects look pretty dirty, but there is some question about whether or not they're actually guilty. That did not obtain over there. Once they had gotten to the point where of those eight guys he was the only one who went to the West so many times and was missing four hours every time to buy car parts, and he couldn't explain himself, he'd spend the rest of his life explaining from the pits of the dungeon. It wouldn't be like he'd be free until they could prove it. Do you see? At that point he had to bolt unless he knew better.

Student: Is that the kind of situation where you offered to get him out, or did he ask to be brought out?

Pappas: The way the arrangements work when you have an asset in place like him is that the asset will have an emergency signal prearranged with the CIA. In the event of either his getting cold feet or some disaster happening, the CIA would rapidly understand the signal and immediately they would know to go to a prearranged place and begin the process of getting him out.

Student: So it's part of the unwritten contract?

Pappas: It's part of the written contract.

The other thing, by the way, which I meant to say before to answer another question, is that this man was not paid a penny. What he did have, though, was an escrowed account in the United States in the event of his having to come out. That's a very important point, because he never anticipated coming out, so he never anticipated any kind of material return except what he thought he was doing for Poland. I can assure you with every fiber of my being that is exactly what he felt. To his dying day he never wanted any of that. On the other hand, he had his family and they were all uprooted. I want to talk about that when I get to the third phase of my relationship with him.

Student: It seems that there were a lot of pieces of information that he needed to have in order to continue this relationship and that it would have required more than semiannual four-hour visits. With the kinds of details like how this emergency communication was set up and that kind of thing it sounds as though there were CIA personnel in Poland who were getting information to him, or is that not true?

Pappas: There were CIA people in Poland and there were CIA people in other countries. This was a network. I don't want to try to duplicate the book, and I'm not trying to hawk it either, because I don't get a penny. This is an exceptionally important book if you're actually interested in this subject. Tony knows that my library at home is all military history and stuff like that, and there is no book that gives you the details of the answers to those questions the way this one does. The access that this author had to the CIA files is literally unprecedented. The nature of the command and control, which is what you're interested in, the nature of the communications networks, the nature of how this is done physically, is described in there in more detail than any other place I've ever seen accurately.

Oettinger: It's from the point of view of the agent, not the case officer as in the Dewey Clarridge book I recommended to you.⁵

Pappas: For example, the case officer with whom he first dealt, by correspondence and infrequent actual meetings, is called Daniel in the book. I know this man. He's a very good man and he stayed a good friend of mine and Kuklinski's for all of his life. Daniel, at some point, had to be reassigned, because he couldn't just work this one guy in Warsaw forever. He had other things he had to do. He was growing in his responsibilities as a CIA officer. But they also realized that Kuklinski had such a deep personal relationship with his handler, Daniel, that they didn't want to risk the possibility of upsetting his emotional state by trying to slip in another case officer. They would have to build up trust and all that all over again. So what they did successfully—you can call this deception if you like, it really is a deception—is they decided that they would continue to send him notes as though they were written by Daniel. They were signed by Daniel, but written by a small committee of officers who knew Daniel very well and could speak and write as if they were he. That went on for a couple of years until Daniel came back into the case on rotation. All of this is important.

⁵Duane R. Clarridge with Digby Diehl, *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Scribner, 1997).

Student: This is related to what you said earlier about “If I find out the secret, you can just change the secret.” Once they realized you had someone who knew their thought processes, to what extent were they capable of changing their thought processes?

Pappas: They’re not. That’s the simple answer to that. That would be like saying, “Okay, we’ve had Ames, we’ve had Walker, we’ve had Whitworth, we’ve had Pollard, we’ve had Hanssen. These people deeply penetrated and deeply wounded the United States by providing secrets to the Soviet Union. What can we do about it? Change everything that we think, change everything that we do, change our approach?” It’s not possible. We would change the details. I’d get another computer, but it would probably still be 512 megs, because I need 512 to do the job I’m doing, or I would find some other way to do my work without using 512. We would start to adjust all the vocational, tactical, and technical things, but we can’t do that with the way we think.

Let’s be fair: they did to us like we did to them. We’ve got Walkers and Hanssens and people like that. When something like that happens, there is nothing we can do about it. We start to change all the secrets. We start to change all the codes. We start to change names and numbers and things like that. But to the degree that they penetrated our thinking process, how often in a lifetime do you change your thinking process? It evolves, but it doesn’t just change overnight.

Student: So you can guess where they’re going to go next.

Pappas: You can do more than guess. You begin to understand it. It’s the penetration of the mystery. It’s less of a mystery, because the nature of the process is now transparent to you, or you begin to think it is.

Student: Not to get too much into the details of the book, but did the CIA ever find out how the Russians found out there was a spy?

Pappas: That’s a really good question. It’s dealt with in the book. They don’t know the details of what happened, but it had something to do with the connection through the Vatican. Why? What’s in the Vatican? A Polish Pope! I believe the United States was providing the Pope with information that would allow him to weigh in and try to preserve the freedom of the Polish people. Once that information went into the Vatican, there is an entirely good, plausible argument to be made that the KGB had penetrated the Vatican. It’s indicated in the book that at least one senior KGB officer subsequently indicated that he indeed had a penetration in the Vatican. He subsequently said he didn’t have one and he was just lying to the press, but now you have a hall of mirrors. You don’t know which one was true. My own belief is that the KGB had a source in the Vatican. When the information was provided to Pope John Paul, though it was still sensitive, it showed knowledge that the United States had access to the plans for Polish martial law and what Solidarity was doing. That information was then passed by the KGB agent back to the KGB and then the KGB passed it back to the Poles. It resulted in the chief of staff saying “We’ve got a spy, because the information was precise.” That’s my opinion.

We kept Kuklinski on account. We were still using him. We started taking him out to all the military commands to speak to the American military. We took him to the war colleges. We took him to the Training and Doctrine Command. We took him everywhere where we could expose

influential American decision makers to this guy so they could understand how he was thinking and what he was doing.

Let me give you sort of a humorous example of why this is significant. You understand that here was a man who literally risked his life to help the West and help his own people. Now, if you were writing the novel, the novel would say that he also believed that if there were a war we'd win. Initially he didn't. He thought they'd win, because as an East European brought up in an East European society, with an East European education, and successful in the East European general staff system, his view was, "Hell, we've got a good plan! I wrote it. We'll beat the pants off you guys! That's one of the reasons I'm spying. I'm worried about what would happen if we win." This was a real shocker to American generals who were kind of expecting a cartoon character to come in and say, "Oh, I was spying for you in the United States because I know that you guys are not only for right and freedom" (which he really believed) "but also that you guys would win." No, he thought we'd lose, because he really believed that this huge Soviet army and this huge Polish army and all the advantages they had with these huge plans and stuff like that would just wipe us out. It was really fun to watch the American generals react to that, because they'd say something like, "What?! This guy just said we'd lose!" "Yes, he believes it."

As he became acclimated as an American, his English became better and in his thought process (an amazing thing to do; if you're a sociologist it's a hell of a thing to watch) he became an American after a time. As he became an American he started to change his opinion of how things would work and then he became of less value to us, because now when he thought about how we should solve a problem it was colored by what he thought we'd like to know, and what he believed we did know, and so on.

There was one occasion that I thought was wonderful. Part of it is described in this book, but it's the reality that's amusing. We were down at Norfolk, briefing a three-star Marine general who later became commandant of the Marine Corps, Al Gray. We were up late at night with Al Gray, sitting in his quarters, smoking cigars, drinking cognac, and talking about military history. This was paradise for nerds like us. The colonel loved it, the general loved it. Two military analysts from the CIA were in there with a Marine general and a Polish colonel with cognac and cigars. It doesn't get any better than this! Gray was pressing this colonel and they were talking about marine things. The Poles have a long coastline, and so the Poles understand marine things, and the Marine was talking about attacking the coast. It was really great.

The next morning, my partner and I were in our hotel room. (Notice: Clancy would put the spy in some fancy hotel. Where did James Bond always stay? The Fontainebleau and all that. We were sharing a goddamn two-double-bed room in Virginia Beach.) Colonel Kuklinski was in another room. He got his own room. In the morning we heard knocking on the door. We woke up and there was Kuklinski, dressed and ready to go, waving a newspaper at us, and saying, "Look at this, look at this!" He'd gotten a call at six-thirty in the morning from his wife, who said, "Go out and get a *Washington Post* right away!" He ran out right away to a 7-11 near the hotel and got the *Washington Post*, read it, and in it was an article about a Polish spy in the United States. It was the first exposure of him, not by name, but of him as a spy and so on. He was furious. "How could he write this? Doesn't he know that my life is in danger?" "Yes." "Doesn't he know that I'm a patriot and I'm doing this for my country?" "Yes." Well, how could he write this?"

How can you explain the freedom of the American press to a person who has grown up in Poland? Talk about a tough concept! He said, “Doesn’t this guy know what might happen?” “Yes, he knows.” “Well, what are you going to do about it?” “Well, what should we do about it?” “Shoot him!” “We can’t do that.” “Why?” “Because he’s from the press.” In his world that’s what would happen. They would get the reporter and boom! He was finished, because he’d revealed a national secret. This reporter was on his way to a Pulitzer prize. This is a different world, and Kuklinski was not yet at the point of understanding how this place works.

Oettinger: The speech that Solzhenitsyn gave here at a Harvard commencement just illustrates that. This great hero of Soviet free thinking and so on sounded like some kind of Stalinist.

Pappas: Which is what they were. They were brought up in that system. All of this affects you. You guys are being taught something and it shapes you. That’s what you are. We live in this structure.

Oettinger: Before you go on, I must tell my Al Gray story. During the first Gulf War General Gray visited with us. He was rather pissed off, because that was the period where they decided that the chiefs of the services wouldn’t have anything to do with actually running the war, so here he was meeting with Harvard people when he would rather have been in the field. So we had an exchange of letters in which he insisted, in Marine Corps style, on signing “Semper fidelis, Al Gray,” and I could not resist. I replied to him, “Veritas, Tony Oettinger.”

Pappas: That’s good!

The last point I want to make is about the third phase of our relationship. He went from being a source to being a colleague. We took him out to see all these generals. We carted him all around the country. We helped support him and we helped protect him here in the United States. Eventually, as you will read in the book, Poland became free and Walesa and those in power came to recognize his contribution.

That recognition was not unambiguous. This is a very interesting point that I want to give you, even at the expense of a couple of minutes. Again, the novel would say that he returned to Poland to a hero’s welcome and all was well. Not so, because Poland broke down into two groups—in fact, more than two groups. The first group was those people who thought he was a hero, because he freed them—and he did. That’s where I am. I think that’s true. The second group, however, was a bunch of communists who were now suddenly on their ass. They were out of power; they got no more money, no more big houses, no more big cars. They were not very happy about him. That’s not surprising. You would expect that.

There was a third group in the middle that was much more interesting to look at. These were people who were opposed to the Soviets all along but never had the kind of courage, the kind of mental stability, the kind of authority in their own thinking process, to do anything about it. Now they turned around and looked at Kuklinski and they said “He did something about it. If he and I felt the same way, and he did something about it and I didn’t, what does that make me?” It made them very ambiguous about him, because they had to rationalize him as a traitor to the Polish oath rather than a contributor to Polish freedom. They got their freedom, so that was in the bag, but if

Poland cited him as too much of a hero, it would make them look not so good by comparison. So there was a very interesting and complex relationship between him and Poland.

The official death sentence was vacated. The whole trial was simply vacated; he wasn't then retried. He was brought back to Poland and given a hero's welcome. He was made an honorary this and that, and he got a chair at the university in Krakow. All kinds of wonderful things happened to him.

Here in the United States he suffered greatly. I don't mean it in some tragi-comic sort of way. Here was a person who fairly late in his life was completely uprooted from his society, his friends, and his background. He uprooted his wife and his two children from the same environment and suddenly plunked them down in the United States without any forewarning. This is a very difficult thing to put up with. It so happens that both of his sons died in accidents—no-kidding accidents. This added to the tragedy of the whole situation. His wife is still alive. He died in his home from a massive cerebral hemorrhage four or five days after the publication of the book, which is unbelievably bad timing. It's just sad. He should have been able to get a little reflected glory from the book for a while, but no.

In the third phase, during the time I knew him as a colleague, he also became my friend. My family knew who he was. My children knew who he was. Again, it's unlike the novels. How do you deal with a person like that on a daily basis and not have your family understand eventually that it's sort of odd to have Aris Pappas walking around Northern Virginia with this guy with a heavy Polish accent and a beard and a fair amount of money. "Where'd you meet this guy?" "Well, you know...." So eventually they figured it out, especially when they saw the newspaper articles. I never had to say anything, but they always knew that A plus B equals C. Even my children understood that. They never said anything to anybody about it, because they also understood the sensitivity of it, particularly as long as he was still under a death sentence. We sailed with him, we visited him at his home, we stayed with him, and we were always very close.

I can attest to his motivation. I can attest to his background, to the way he felt about Poland, to the way he felt about the whole philosophical attitude of being subjugated, and so on. On one occasion I introduced him to Professor Oettinger, and I think that it's fair to say all of that came across in that one meeting.

This was a guy who at the bottom line was probably one of the three to five most important spies to work for the United States, because of the volume of his material and the significance of this material as the Rosetta Stone for our ability to understand what was going on not only in Poland but also in the Soviet Union and throughout the Warsaw Pact. It's a truly great story.

The book is written by a *New York Times* reporter. It is not some in-house publication by the CIA. Interestingly, the author is not a reporter of intelligence matters. His professional work is as a medical ethicist, but he found the ethical issue of "When are you a spy, when are you a patriot, and when are you a traitor and to whom, and in what order?" very interesting, which is what got him on the track of this gentleman. Eventually the CIA, because of the cold war being over, gave him a lot of cooperation in terms of access to material and to people like me and others who had a lot to do with the case.

It was truly a privilege to work with a guy like Kuklinski, because it doesn't happen even once in a lifetime on average. It's a very unusual circumstance and, frankly, a great privilege to have anything to do with something like that and to know that you've managed to accomplish something that did a little bit of good someplace. He was a great guy.

I really do recommend the book, because it's exciting. Most of the stuff in there is how they passed messages in gloves in snowbanks, and cars, and brush passes, and all that. It's all in there. It's very good, and you will never read anything that's more accurate—certainly not in books like John LeCarré and all that where the relationships are always these bizarre, three-fold, back-stabbing, triple-cross kinds of deals. That's not often the way it is. This is more often the way it is, so this is the real story.

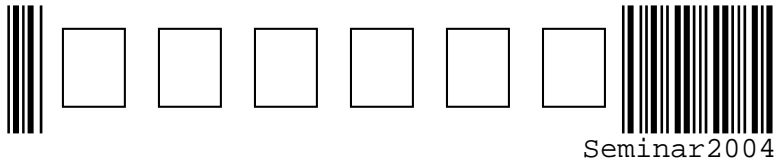
Oettinger: We want to give you a small token of our large appreciation, sir. You've done nobly.

Pappas: I did great, right?

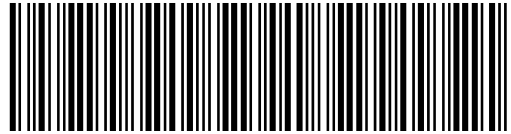
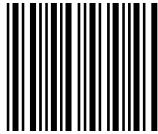
Oettinger: Yes, fantastic!

Acronyms

CCNY	City College of New York
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DCI	director of central intelligence
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
HUMINT	human intelligence
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopaznosti
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization



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